UNITED NATIONS

WORLD CHRONICLE

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Director of Communications
UNESCO

JOURNALISTS: Bhaskar Menon, PTI-TV, India
Sally Swing Shelley, the Voice of Germany
James Bone, *The Times* of London

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UNESCO

Alain Modoux, Director of Communications of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), discusses the role communications play in promoting peace and tolerance. He calls for the protection of the media to enable them to work independently from governments. Mr. Modoux reveals that UNESCO, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and human rights groups, has established a system to monitor the freedom of the press around the world.

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ANNOUNCER: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is WORLD CHRONICLE, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's WORLD CHRONICLE.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns and this is WORLD CHRONICLE.

Over the last few decades, the media have played an incredible role in reporting the world's events. The flow of information by word and image is today reaching every corner of the globe. Meanwhile, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO, has helped developing countries to enhance their means of communications. At the centre of this is the freedom of the press, pluralism, and the independence of the media.

Our guest today, Alain Modoux, is UNESCO's Director of Communications. A national of Switzerland, Mr. Modoux will be interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by Bhaskar Menon of PTI-TV of India; Sally Swing Shelley of the Voice of Germany; and James Bone of *The Times* of London.

Before we talk to Mr. Modoux, let's look at how one country, Indonesia, is working to strengthen its communications capabilities. Our correspondent Steve Whitehouse reports.

WHITEHOUSE:

Jogjakarta, in central Java, Indonesia, is renowned for its magnificent Buddhist temples. Tourists flock here to admire the 16th century shrine of Borobudur.

For Indonesians, Jogjakarta means much more than cultural treasures, it's also a centre of learning. One educational institution here is the Multimedia Training Centre, the MMTC. As a rapidly developing country, Indonesia is relying more and more on the electronic media throughout its 13,000 islands. The state-owned television service now has 10 broadcasting stations all over the country. The government estimates that 141 million people watch television every day.

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With UNESCO support, the Multimedia Training Centre trains broadcast journalists to staff the country's expanding electronic media.

Victorien Limaswari is one of the lucky students to win a scholarship to MMTC. Here, she polishes up her on-camera TV appearance. It'll help further her career in television.

VICTORINE (IN INDONESIAN):
When I become a television producer, I would like to contribute my expertise to increase the quality of broadcasting in our local programming.

WHITEHOUSE:
The Centre's daily schedule is rigorous. Wake-up call is at four in the morning. At dawn, Victorine joins other students for the obligatory military drill. Exercise is a game of volleyball.

As part of field training, students visit the local TV station. Interviewing the station manager helps Victorine gain on-camera self confidence.

Forty-five kilometres from Jogjakarta, students observe a village media awareness group called a *kelompencapir*. Victorien gets firsthand information on how government officials assess the needs of villagers. For students, the outing to Borobudur is more than cultural education, it's also an opportunity to touch Buddha's toes to insure good luck in exams.

The Indonesian archipelago, with its diverse peoples and cultures, presents special communications problems. The Media Institute is helping train television and radio professionals to meet the needs of both urban and rural people.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Modoux, I guess those Indonesians we've just seen are very happy with UNESCO and the assistance they're receiving from your organization. But another country in the region, namely Singapore, was so disenchanted that it pulled out of its membership of UNESCO, and of course several years ago the United States and the United Kingdom also withdrew from membership. Why is there this disparity, Indonesia gung-ho, and the others taking a rather poor view of UNESCO?

MODOUX: Well, I think that regarding the US and the UK, their reasons were totally different from the reasons of Singapore. It was in '84-85 the UK and the USA left UNESCO, thinking that the organization was not faithful to its fundamental mandate, that it was mismanaged, and also that it was not supporting the freedom of the press as it should. I think for Singapore the reasons were totally different. If I'm correctly informed, it was at that time mainly because they think it was too, too expensive, they didn't receive any -- the money in return of -- or they didn't receive the services in return of the money they put in UNESCO budget as their contribution, so it was totally different.

LITTLEJOHNS: So in light of those withdrawals, have there been changes in UNESCO to address the concerns that were raised?

MODOUX: Well, of course it's not so much my role to say that, but I would like to contribute at least to have a good idea of the situation today regarding the problem of communication, which was at that time considered as a key issue by both the Americans and the British.

I have the strong feeling that things have changed totally. I've just come from Washington, where we had the other day a conference given by Mr. Mayor, the Director General of UNESCO, in front of the World Press Freedom Committee people, explaining what is the situation today regarding communication, and I have to say that these World Press Freedom Committee people were at that time those who fought very strongly against UNESCO. And today, all of them recognize that the situation is totally changed, that UNESCO is without any doubt committed to the freedom of the press, is of course also committed to communication development in the south, and in the east -- it's quite obvious.

And regarding management, the Americans sent a few months ago a special mission of the GAO, the General Accounting Office, to survey the UNESCO administration, and the report recognized a lot of changes, reforms, really have been

conducted. And today we can say that UNESCO is not worse, rather better than any other UN organization.

Regarding Singapore, there is for the time being no real signal of their position towards UNESCO. Of course, the major problem is the absence of these two countries, not only for financial reasons, of course -- the Americans were number one in terms of contribution -- but also because of the role of these two countries in the field of education, in the field of sciences. And speaking of communication, which is in this country in particular the number one industry.

LITTLEJOHNS: Especially here in New York. Do you think with a new administration in Washington that the United States might relent and come back in?

MODOUX: Certainly this is our hope, this is our hope. But, of course, the decision is in the hands of the administration. It's true, too, that we have to take into consideration the fact that there is now a general debate on the future of the United Nations system, how it should be organized and so on. And I'm sure that in Washington as well as in London they are going to take into consideration also all these aspects.

MENON: Mr. Modoux, in the Charter of UNESCO you have the phrase that "Wars begin in the minds of men, and it is in the minds of men that the defences against war must be erected". Now, in your field of communications, this would seem to be extremely important, especially at this time, when there is so much conflict within countries, as much as between countries, because of lack of communication between communities, ethnic groups and so on. What does UNESCO do in this particular respect?

MODOUX: Well, this is a key sentence in the UNESCO constitution. And when we see what happens in Eastern Europe, in Yugoslavia particularly, in India, even in the streets of New York in terms of intolerance regarding another ethnic group, it's quite obvious that this message is most topical, is most topical.

That was the fundamental mission of UNESCO, to try to build up this defence of peace in the minds of people, through education, through science, and through culture, through communication. It's true that when you consider these situations, we have the impression that we are still far from being successful, but this is -- UNESCO is not just an organization, it's you. It's the whole world, all people, all nations. And it means that we still have to work hard to try to build up this defence of peace in the minds of people.

As far as I'm concerned regarding communication, which is my field, I'm appalled to say that communication can be such a terrible weapon in these conflicts in spreading hatred, intolerance, extremist feelings; and this is in our program for the very near, near future to see what can be done in a situation like Yugoslavia, for instance, or ex-Yugoslavia. What can be done to help communication not to be a weapon for war, but a weapon for peace?

MENON: At the moment, then, you have no program that looks at this particular problem, or addresses this particular problem?

MODOUX: Well, if you remember, regarding this case of ex-Yugoslavia, the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Mazowiecki, from --

LITTLEJOHNS: The ex-Prime Minister of Poland.

MODOUX: Yes. Apart all the recommendations he made, there was one related to communication saying that the press people should be helped to do their work according to their ethics, to keep their independence, and not to be put in such a situation that finally they are just the spokesmen of the warlords in this country. It was even proposed that maybe a kind of communication centre independent from the belligerents should be set up and put under a UN umbrella, so to disseminate a fair and peaceful message to the population. This particular recommendation we are working on. I am here also in New York to have some discussions with our colleagues at the UN to see what could be done.

This is the first step, which is very modest. I've been myself in the past with the International Committee of the Red Cross, I've been in conflict situations for so many years that I'm realistic enough to understand how difficult it is. But we can't just wait and think that maybe things will change; they won't change if we don't do anything.

So the first modest, very modest, initiative is to organize [in the] beginning of 1993 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, a roundtable with a certain number of journalists, independent journalists, representing all the republics of the ex-Yugoslavia, the former Yugoslavia. And this meeting is organized jointly with the International Federation of Journalists and the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers, and we will see with our colleagues from the region what could be done to protect in a way the information from this terrible war climate.

I am not very optimistic, but we have to try to do something.

SHELLEY: Leonard Sussman, Mr. Modoux, a senior scholar of Freedom House, has just published, or just has completed, a study of freedom of the press in 177 countries. He found that 67 countries have a free press, 60 have a mixed picture, and 50 have no free press. My two questions are, right now, do you plan to publish, as UNESCO, do you plan to publish this study? And my second questions is what are you planning to do about the 110 nations today that don't have really a free press, or have a partially free press?

MODOUX: Regarding your first question, certainly; we worked very closely with Leonard Sussman. I was with him yesterday. And it's quite obvious that these figures should encourage us to continue our work to promote independent and pluralistic media around the world. We started two years ago in Africa: we organized jointly with the UN in Windhoek, Namibia, a regional seminar to promote independent and pluralistic media in Africa. I must say that this meeting, which was attended by independent journalists and publishers, and also some people representing the radio and TV, but mostly print media, this meeting was a milestone, is a milestone in the struggle for freedom of the press.

The Declaration, so-called Declaration of Windhoek was adopted, and this is now the best text we have to work in that direction. More and more African countries which are going to a democratic system, these countries need, of course, our support, and mainly the press people need our support, to work independently from the government. It's not only a question of speech, to talk and to make beautiful declarations, they have also very concrete problems. Because to be independent journalists, especially in the print media, you need to be organized, you need management, you need money, you need newsprint, you need equipment, you need distribution systems. Unfortunately, as far as Africa is concerned, most of these independent media are far from having all these facilities.

So one of the roles of UNESCO, and through UNESCO and the international community, is to provide these news media with the necessary needs and training, so they can develop and participate in this democratic process.

SHELLEY: Would you be in favour of the World Bank withholding loans to countries that don't have a free press, or even a partially free press?

MODOUX: Well, I have to make -- this is a very personal opinion -- we have to make a distinction between development in the field of education, for instance, that

because a country is not democratic that you are going to prevent the population from having access to education. By definition, these countries must receive assistance to fight against illiteracy, for instance.

But regarding communication, as far as UNESCO is concerned, we have, since this Windhoek meeting, we have changed the regulations of our International Programme for Development of Communication, the IPDC, to such an extent that today governments -- not only governments, but private organizations -- can present proposals, projects to UNESCO. And if you have in competition a governmental project and a private project, the private project will have the priority.

LITTLEJOHNS: The programme is WORLD CHRONICLE, our guest is Alain Modoux, UNESCO's Director of Communications. James Bone.

BONE: Mr. Modoux, a veteran colleague of mine who is a columnist and fought in World War Two likes to say that for years the West complained that people in Eastern Europe weren't allowed to say what they thought, and now they do say what they think, we don't like it, there are so many ethnic conflicts and everything. When Eduard Shevardnadze came here recently to speak to the General Assembly as the President of Georgia he also proposed the kind of system that you're talking about in relation to Yugoslavia for his own country, where you would have some kind of UN information centre, it wasn't quite clear, that would disseminate factual information on which journalists could base their stories, rather than running rather inflammatory and speculative stories.

Is that a viable thing, to actually set up some kind of UN information dissemination in countries where there's conflict going on?

MODOUX: Well, I'm not sure that it should be -- that the work itself, the professional work should be the responsibility of, I would say, international civil servants. I think that the professional work should be made by the professionals themselves. But you have -- in any country you have very good professionals who would like to keep their independence; the problem is that they are put under such a pressure, they are threatened, even some of them are killed because they try to keep this independence.

So the problem is more to create a framework protecting these people from these pressures, so they can do their job normally. And I think that that could be the role of the UN system, but not at all to substitute the journalists themselves. We have our own information services to say what the UN, what UNESCO, what the Red Cross is doing,

but that's another question. But in the case of Yugoslavia, in the case of Georgia, maybe many other countries, the first purpose would [be to] try to imagine an umbrella, and -- why not? -- maybe in some particular cases to have also a kind of military protection, because in any coup, in any military operation, the first target is the radio and the television building. So of course we might have also the obligation to protect these premises.

But I would like to be very clear, the professional work should be done by professionals.

SHELLEY: I'm curious about whether UNESCO is thinking about monitoring freedom of not only the press but of television. I was in a European country recently and noticed that when the news was coming that the government didn't like, even though it was a free press country, they turned off the television, the television set went blank. And similarly, during this last campaign in the United States on at least three occasions there was a glitch in the television station so that the news coming on the elections was not full. I'm wondering if UNESCO couldn't monitor freedom of the press and media, and come out with an annual report.

MODOUX: Well, we are doing it in a way. Now, we have established a system in cooperation with different non-governmental organizations, both professional organizations, like the International Federation of Journalists or the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers on the one side, and human rights organizations, like Article 19, Committee to Protect Journalists, and so on. We have now a group of organizations which constituted in Toronto a clearing house to monitor the situation of the press around the world. So we have all the information going to Toronto and redistributed.

And of course, according to this information, we have to discuss the kind of measures we have to take to help the press in danger in this or that part of the world. Of course, the approach might be different from country to country, but now there is an organized system, supported by UNESCO, and of course, these organizations themselves are publishing -- you mentioned before Freedom House -- all these organizations are publishing of course information on the situation, and UNESCO is also participating in the funding of these reports.

MENON: Mr. Modoux, if you remember the history of the programme that you had, the International Programme for Development of Communications, it came out of a

debate about imbalance in news flows globally; about how basically two or three countries, essentially Britain and the United States, dominated world information flows. To what extent has the programme been able to have an effect on that imbalance? Has there been any change? Does UNESCO monitor the change?

MODOUX: Let's be frank, the situation probably in this particular field is still more unbalanced than it was 10 years ago, that's clear. But the problem is not to try to have a better, a wider and better balanced dissemination of information, in cutting, in making obstacles to the freedom of the press; no, we have to try to have a more balanced situation without any obstacle to the freedom of expression. That should be quite clear.

And how to have a better balance is of course through communication development programmes, and this is one of the objectives we have now, is to change in the donor countries also the priorities. If you take the so-called industrialized world, the communication industry is number one today. Now, if you look at the figures regarding development programmes, communication is less than one per cent. So we have to enhance the place of communication development in the global development strategies of the development agencies and foundations. This is what we have to do, and this is the goal of the International Programme for Development of Communications. But it's not easy, especially now with this economic crisis, where money is rather rare.

MENON: What level of funding do you have for the IPDC? What's your current level of funding?

MODOUX: It's a few -- unfortunately, a few million dollars. You don't go very far with that, so that's why we have to work hard to increase it.

BONE: In most countries, I imagine, there's a government-run broadcasting station, the government even controls the airwaves by licensing them out to any non-governmental broadcasters. Maybe your program ought to be looking less at forms of mass communication like television and radio, which are controlled from the centre, and should be handing out cellular telephones to people. Is there any thought along these lines, of giving more democratic forms of communication?

MODOUX: Well, I like your question because it's very topical. We are sending these days a mission to Kazakhstan, where you still have a governmental radio and television. And the authorities would like to be helped to transform the governmental

television and radio into a public service, a real public service, working according to democratic standards, with an independent journalistic board.

So this is something we are now -- it's a new approach: you have the private commercial networks, of course, and we have to help them too, but we have to support the governments which are trying to make this transformation from a governmental broadcasting system to a public service broadcasting system. And this is very, very important, because a commercial network, by definition, has to gain money to survive. And cultural programmes, educational programmes, are not so much programmes for a big audience. So you don't see these programmes on the screen of commercial television. But if all our countries want to keep their cultural identity, it's very important that you have these programmes on the screen. And the public service is in a good position to do it.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Modoux, that's all the time we have. Thank you for joining us on this edition of WORLD CHRONICLE.

Our guest has been Alain Modoux, UNESCO's Director of Communications. He was interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by Bhaskar Menon of PTI-TV of India; Sally Swing Shelley of the Voice of Germany; and James Bone of *The Times* of London.

I'm Michael Littiejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of WORLD CHRONICLE.

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